

Ride of the Valkyrie

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Summary: Vaz made a promise to Naomi's father that he would look out for her, but when a mysterious ONI Captain begins asking questions about Kilo-Five's actions on the Pious Inquisitor, Vaz comes to learn that Naomi made her own promise in regards to him. Short fic, approximately two chapters of equal length. Wrote this for my friend Heat in Freezing who is a big Vaz/Naomi fan.

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Naomi's fist collided with the bag, a short and lightning quick jab outward with her left arm. Several more followed, her movements little more than a blur to normal human eyesight. She pivoted on the balls of her feet, moving her body in concert with her right arm to deliver a powerful uppercut. The force of the punch sent the punching bag bouncing on its chain. Her inanimate opponent had little time to recover as she kicked with her left leg.

Captain Victor Romanov of the Office of Naval Intelligence looked on with mild interest. There were some in ONI who would have carted the Spartan into a private room, or have her stand at attention under a hot spotlight while they interrogated her. Romanov was not above those methods, or more extreme ones for that matter, but he knew that methods of intimidation had little to no effect on Spartans. Besides, it was much more comfortable to question her in a more natural setting.

"So you do not believe there was any chance that he might have survived?" Romanov asked.

"No sir," Naomi said, resuming her left handed jabs. The force and speed of her blows made it seem as if an invisible hand was holding the punching bag at a forty five degree angle in midair.

"And why do you believe that?" Romanov asked. Naomi side eyed him. He

was a taller than the average man, well over six feet, with a clean shaven head and facial features vaguely resembling Vaz's, thereby denoting a similar Russian heritage. Unlike Vaz, Romanov lacked a thick accent. Whatever trace of it he might have had told Naomi that he more than likely grew up in the colonies rather than Russia. But above everything else, his black eyes commanded most of her attention.

Naomi grabbed the punching bag with both hands, a single trail of sweat creeping down her temple, originating from the crown of platinum blonde hair. Romanov supposed that in another life she could very well have been considered model material. "Permission to speak freely sir?"

"Granted," Romanov said, folding his arms behind his back. He, like Naomi, was wearing standard issue PT gear, the UNSC emblem running across his chest. The Spartan found it rather odd that he would change into work out cloths just to interview her.

"Captain Osman filed her report of the incident directly to Admiral Parangosky."

"Indeed she did," Romanov said. Naomi remained silent. The Spartan would not ask the question out loud, but he knew what it was a surely as if he had read her mind. "It's not that Parangosky does not trust you or the rest of your team Petty Officer. If she didn't then this little interview would never have happened. The Admiral is not a believer in letting those whom she does not trust know that she doesn't trust them. Not until the time is right, as I'm sure Halsey can attest to."

Naomi's right eyebrow twitched at the mention of Halsey's name. It was the only emotion she showed, but Romanov nevertheless took note of it. When it came to Spartans every facial expression, no matter how subtle, held vast amounts of meaning. Romanov continued speaking. "Parangosky is also a believer in obtaining information from multiple perspectives, which is why I am here. To give the Admiral a new perspective on the incident."

"And that is the only reason?" Naomi asked.

Romanov smiled. "There are others, but you don't have a high enough security clearance for me to tell you."

Naomi nodded almost imperceptively, an indication that she was satisfied with Romanov's answers. "So why do you believe he is dead."

"Simple," Naomi said. "The Spirit Staffan Sentzke was piloting had no slip space drive, and the sub space engines would not have been able to take him far enough away from the Pious Inquisitor in order to escape the blast in time."

"Yes, Black Box gave me a detailed and rather mathematical lecture on why his escape would have been an impossibility," Romanov seemingly agreed. "Staffan Sentzke. It is rather interesting that you would call him that."

"That is his name sir," Naomi said.

"His full name," Romanov said. "Not Staffan, or Mr. Sentzke, or father, or dad, or even pa. Just Staffan Sentzke. One man in a billion. Is that how you view him?"

Naomi noticeably stiffened, her shoulders straightening, her posture becoming more rigid. "Yes sir," she said. Her voice was monotone. A lie if Romanov had ever heard one.

"What was your relationship with your father?"

"None," Naomi said. "I only met him once."

"Except for your early childhood," Romanov pointed out. "You don't remember anything about that time?"

"Nothing," Naomi said. She might as well of written the word 'lie' on her forehead in bold black marker for all the good it was doing her.

"Your father was made aware of the Spartan II program at Captain Osman's discretion?" he asked. Naomi nodded. "And he didn't have any reaction?"

"He did."

"And that was?"

"He was upset," Naomi said.

"I would think upset would be an understatement," Romanov said. "He had been willing to kill millions just so that he could find out what happened to you." He shrugged his shoulders. "And people think Halsey is evil. At least what she did ended up saving lives."

"Halsey made my father into what he is," Naomi said. Without realizing it she had taken a step forward towards Romanov. Realizing her sudden aggressive posture and tone she added a hasty "Sir."

"Is?" Romanov asked. "Don't you mean was?"

"Of course sir."

"Do you know what a Freudian Slip is Petty Officer?"

"No sir."

"Wouldn't expect you to. You were always more interested in stars than with the mind. I can sympathize. When I was younger I was fascinated with space ships. Built models of them by the dozen."

"I'm sure you were very proficient at it sir," Naomi said, a hint of sarcasm creeping through.

"I'm proficient at most things," Romanov agreed. "So you are certain he is dead?"

"Positive."

"I suppose that will have to do," Romanov said. "As I said Black Box showed me the mathematical models and it is very unlikely that he is wrong. Thank you for your time Petty Officer."

"You're welcome sir," Naomi said, personally very glad that he was leaving. She waited for him to turn around before focusing her attention back on the punching bag.

Just as she was spreading her legs back out into a fighting stance Romanov called from behind her. "Just out of curiosity, is it usual for you to receive packages from the dead?"

Naomi turned back around. "I don't understand."

"I believe you do," Romanov said, walking back over to her. "I know that Corporal Vasily Beloi received an anonymous package. One containing a planetarium lamp and a small wooden dolls chair." He smiled at her with the expression of a shark who had smelt blood in the water and was now busy circling its prey. "Don't worry, Vaz didn't tell me anything. I have my own sources. Those items, random to some, but to someone who knows your past, like me, they gain a much greater significance."

He had moved closer now. Naomi was not looking directly at him, instead staring straight ahead. It was a common reflex among Spartans when they could offer no explanation to their superiors. This Romanov knew. He knew more about Spartans than any other man in the UNSC. "He's alive," Romanov said.

Naomi's mind was racing. He knew about her, knew about her past, perhaps knew even more about it than she did. Only a very select few in ONI possessed the security clearance to review those files, but there was something else also. She could not help but feel that Romanov could read her like an open book, that he knew what she was going to do and say before she did. It unnerved her. She looked directly at him and asked, "Who are you? What are you really after?"

He seemed to ponder the question for a moment before answering. "Halsey asked me a similar question when I interviewed her. It seems that more of her rubbed off on you than you realize." He was now close enough to Naomi that only about an inch separated the two. Naomi was taller, but Romanov had a natural intimidation about him. A complete willingness to disregard and invade her personal space. "Where is he?" he asked.

Naomi went back to looking straight ahead. It was becoming annoying.

"Your father is a terrorist," he said. "A thief, and a murderer. He has threatened the lives of millions of people. People who you have sworn to protect. A man like that cannot be allowed to roam free. Tell me where he is."

"Even if I knew," Naomi said through gritted teeth. "I wouldn't tell you."

Romanov's face darkened. "Have you forgotten what you are?" Until now his emotions had appeared to be faux at best, but now he seemed to be legitimately angry. "You've been spending too much time with the

likes of Vaz and Mal. Remember who you are 010." He brought himself to full height, still half a head shorter than Naomi, but with them in such close proximity to each other she had to resist the urge to step back, if only to keep herself from striking him.

"You are a Spartan," he whispered. "A soldier of humanity. Nothing more than that. A machine, a weapon. To be created and consumed in times of need." He took a step back from her, his eyes looking her up in down, disgust apparent. "I like to think I hold myself to the same standard, but you have abandoned it." He smiled, his teeth shining with bright cruelty. "You know don't you? Yes, on the surface you might hate Halsey and sympathize with your father, but deep down you know that the Spartan II program was your salvation."

Both if Naomi's hands clenched into fists. Romanov took delight in the vagrant display of emotion he had been able to elicit in her. "Your family would have held you back. You would never have been able to achieve your full potential if you had remained with them. Would never have been able to accomplish even a fraction of what you have achieved in your life. You would have been better off if you had never been reunited with your father. He should have killed himself like your mother did. Would have saved me the trouble of having to kill him myself."

Naomi was about to say something. If she had gone and punched him she would not have been surprised. Romanov had known all the right buttons to push. Her cheeks were red, her nostrils flared as she attempted to remain calm. Luckily, a familiar voice rose up to interrupt Romanov's infuriating speech.

"Well that's not very nice to say."

Romanov turned around, Naomi looking over his head. Vaz stood some distance behind them, leaning up against the concrete wall of the gym. An apple was in his right hand. As he stared Romanov down he took a large bite out of it, a loud crunching sound being the result. He did not wait to swallow before speaking, his words becoming slightly muffled as a result. "With all due respect sir, I think what you just said violates a few protocols when it comes to interviewing an enlisted person." He swallowed and took another large bite. "But I guess you spooks aren't a bit fan of rules. I can sympathize. Not a big fan of them myself."

"I can see that," Romanov said, turning his body fully to face him. "Corporal Beloi I take it?"

Vaz nodded, swallowing the bit of apple hard. "And I'm guessing your Captain Asshole."

Romanov frowned. "I could have you reprimanded for saying that."

"Wouldn't be the first time," Vaz said with a shrug. He pushed himself off of the wall and strode towards the two of them. "You know sir, I've always wondered what it would be like to hit an officer."

Romanov raised both eyebrows. "I take it you want to find out."

"Now would be a good time sir, but the thing is I really don't feel

like being court martialed." He looked down at the PT long-sleeved sweatshirt Romanov was wearing and then back up to his eyes. "You're already in PT gear. Maybe we can work out differences with some sparing. Noncom versus officer. Battle for the ages."

"I'd like that," Romanov said. "If you'll give me a second." He walked a few feet away, bent down on one knee, and began untying one of his shoes.

"You alright?" Vaz whispered to Naomi, coming in close to do it.

"Vaz, don't do this," Naomi whispered back. "It's just words. I'm fine."

Vaz looked up at her, his face lacking the nonchalant demeanor it had before and instead appeared to be flushed with raw anger. "Nobody talks to you like that."

He turned away from her, facing Romanov who now had both shoes off and was now removing his socks. "Any reason why you're doing that sir?"

"You can drop the sir while we are sparing," Romanov answered. "And if I don't take my shoes off I'll end up breaking your jaw."

"You'll have to hit me first," Vaz said, widening his feet out to shoulder with. Romanov stood up and did the same, bringing his fists up in a defensive position.

"That will be the easy part," he said. He stood up. Romanov was taller than Vaz, but that did little to discourage the Helljumper. Plunging from high orbit into the midst of a battle torn planet with nothing but a few inches of steel separating you from the hot burn of reentry, all of it so that you could fight Brutes twice your size once you landed did much to squash the fear in any man who wore the ODSI insignia.

Romanov offered no fighting stance, his arms flat at his side.

Vaz bit his tongue, stepping forward and offering a quick jab to Romanov's jaw. The Captain stepped sideways, dodging the blow easily. Undeterred Vaz continued his assault, driving Romanov backwards as his fists continued to aim for the Captain's face. Romanov stepped backward in even measure, eventual having to block one of Vaz's blows with his forearm. Vaz saw an opening. He bent his knees and moved to deliver a body shot to Romanov's left side. The Captain brought his elbow down, blocking Vaz's punch. He punched outward with his right fist, slamming against the side of Vaz's head.

It was a hard punch, enough to leave Vaz's ear ringing, but it was nothing the Helljumper had never experienced before. Romanov had now moved into a fighting stance and moved on the offensive in order to follow up on his first strike against Vaz.

The two exchanged blows as they moved across the gym. Vaz's form was far from sloppy, and was in many ways superior to Romanov's style of fighting. The man was precise and fluid, evident of someone who had learned how to fight under a specific rule set. It was not too dissimilar to how Spartans fought. Vaz should now, having unwisely

challenged Naomi on more than one occasion.

Vaz, for his part, had been taught how to win by any means necessary. When Romanov left his groin vulnerable Vaz brought up his knee. Rather than block it Romanov took the blow, his face grimacing as his manhood was crushed by Vaz's kneecap. Still, he did not falter, allowing Vaz a small victory in exchange for scooping his leg up with both arms. One hand went under Vaz's leg, another on the heel of his foot.

Romanov thrust the leg high above his head, sending the ODSST tumbling backwards. Vaz used the momentum to do a backwards summersault, landing right back on his feet. Before he could move his fists back up into a defensive posture, Romanov's heel collided with his face.

Vaz tasted blood, the dark red droplets forming on the edge of his mouth. He now understood why Romanov had removed his shoes.

Romanov went on the attack, sending a flurry of kick's in Vaz's direction. One landed on his stomach, sending the air rushing out of his lungs. In an attempt to return the favor from earlier Vaz reached down to grab Romanov's leg, but his hands only touched empty air. The movement caused him to go off balance, and Vaz stumbled forward, his right leg jutting out in order to keep himself from falling. Romanov took the open invitation.

One more kick, this time directed downward at Vaz's leg. He heard the dry snap of a tree branch before he felt the pain, his leg breaking and then crumpling up underneath him. Vaz bit his lip, the cry of pain dying in his throat before it could leak out. In a fit of defiance he tried to lung at Romanov, springing forward on his one good leg, his broken one trailing behind.

Romanov used his momentum against him, grabbing Vaz's left arm and hurling him face first into the ground. He put a foot on Vaz's back, twisting the arm violently. "You Helljumpers always think you are better than you actually are," he said, bending Vaz's arm at an unnatural angle.

He meant to break it, and moved to do just that, when he caught a blonde blur moving out of the corner of his eye.

Now it was Romanov's turn to feel the wind rushing out of him as Naomi sent a sharp elbow into his stomach. The force of the blow sent him flying backwards several feet, a bit of blood finding its way into his mouth as he landed. Romanov looked up, meeting Naomi's harsh gaze.

She stood astride Vaz, leg on either side of his body. Protecting him, her fists up, and her face a wall of stone, a fierce hot fire burning in her eyes. Romanov attempted to get up, but Naomi moved too quickly. A kick landed across his side and Romanov was sent hurtling in the opposite direction, his body tumbling across the floor like a rag doll.

He moved to stand up again, and this time Naomi let him. She sent several body shots his way, pummeling Romanov with brutal efficiency. He managed to get one punch out, his fist landing just short of Naomi's face before she seized his arm, her grip bruising the skin

underneath, turning it into a dark purple. She circled behind him, bringing his captured arm with her. While still holding the arm she placed a hand onto his shoulder, and pushing downward, brought Romanov to his knees.

"Hurts doesn't it?" Naomi furiously hissed at him. With a quick pull and twist of her wrist, Naomi yanked Romanov's arm out of its socket with a loud pop.

To his credit Romanov did not yell, but his face did contort in pain. When Naomi let him go he fell onto the gym floor. Naomi stood over them, her breathing heavy. Heavier than it should have been considering she had exerted very little energy. Still, she felt her heart racing, more emotions flooding through her than she had ever recalled feeling at once. Anger, rage, worry as she looked over at Vaz, and something else. Something that she could not define.

Whatever it was it made her want to hurt Romanov. To pummel him until he was nothing but a stain on the floor, to make him feel every bit of pain Vaz was feeling ten times over.

It was the sound of a cane that stopped her from doing that. Admiral Parangosky slowly made her way into the gym, Captain Serin Osman close behind her. "Stand down Petty Officer," she said calmly.

Naomi looked down, realizing that her hands were still clenched into fists. She slowly released them. Parangosky stopped beside Naomi and looked down at Romanov. He was beginning to stand up, but an outstretched wrinkled hand stopped him, leaving him on his knees in front of the much older woman. Parangosky's gaze penetrated Romanov, her calculating eyes seeing every detail. "We'll discuss your misconduct later Captain," she said. "For now get yourself to the medical bay. Captain Osman, if you'll please escort him."

Osman helped Romanov to his feet, and although Naomi did not mean to pry she could not help but hear what she said to him. "Are you alright?" Osman whispered to him. It was the way she said it that Naomi found strange. It was not too dissimilar to how she and Vaz talked to each other.

If Parangosky heard Osman's worried question then she did not pay it any mind. "Can you walk Corporal?" she asked Vaz.

"Afraid not ma'am," Vaz said. He tried not to look directly at Naomi, his wounded pride hurting far more than his leg. _So much for the knight in shining armor, _he thought bitterly.

Parangosky nodded. "Naomi, if you'll please fetch a medical team for Corporal Beloi."

"Yes ma'am," Naomi said, but she hesitated before moving. Going to get the medical team meant that Vaz would be left alone with the most feared woman in the UNSC.

"Go on Naomi," Parangosky said. "Me and Vaz have a lot to discuss."

Naomi gave Vaz one last worried look before leaving the gym. Vaz watched her though, his heartbeat jumping up a few notches as

Parangosky stared down at him. "Now Corporal," she said, her voice almost sweet. "Tell me about the doll's chair you received."

End
file.